

The Intersectionality of Race and Gender in Higher Education: The Plight of the African-
American Woman at a Predominantly White Institution

Thesis

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Abstract

The purpose of this study is to conduct a qualitative methodological examination of the intersectionality of race and gender in higher education to examine how these domains may impact the academic success of African-American women at Predominantly White Institutions (PWIs) like The Ohio State University (OSU). This research examines the role social & institutional supports, campus climate and sense of belonging play in student success. Utilizing a case study approach, data are collected through an online *Qualtrics* survey and personal hour-long interviews. The survey examined social supports, campus climate and sense of belonging. Data is transcribed (verbatim) using auditory interpretive analysis. Manifest and latent qualitative analysis results in the identification of themes were documented throughout the transcription process.

Personal interview questions were designed to identify perceptions of institutional support structures and programs within the university. Other questions sought to identify barriers believed to prevent or limit access to program and service supports in place. The interpersonal exchange aimed to specify and assess barriers that may limit access to institutional supports. Additional questions focused on the lived experiences of each participant. Of particular interest is how experiences impact one's collegiate career; individual perspectives about and perceptions of support for African-American women at the university level are revealed. Participants' academic experiences at this PWI are addressed and revealed. Results show the intersection of race and gender create an environment that is difficult to 'master' and obtain resources needed to success.

Dedication

This study is dedicated to the participants who shared their stories and made this research possible.

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Curriculum Vitae

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Chapter 1: Statement of Research Topic

In society, African-American students have a different collegiate experience than their counter-parts due to the facets of race and gender. They are “less likely to persist to degree completion than white students” (Cross and Slater, 2001, p.103). Especially, African-American women because they have a unique experience of being two minorities- both black and female- and have been treated in a “peripheral manner by higher education” (Moses, 1989, p.6). Julia (2000) states that at all levels, education has been affected by gender and Lerner (1992) states that black women have not been permitted to attain status (wealth and education) greater than their counterparts.

Throughout this manuscript African American and black are used interchangeably to refer to the same racial group. Authors cited as references may refer to the same population differently.

African-American women are subject to systematic and institutionalize racism that can be a barrier to their academic success. According to Harley (2008), “unlike their white female professionals who are daughters of white men, African American women at PWIs are overwhelmingly recipients of de-privileged consequences” (p. 25). These consequences are examples of racism in institutional policy and practice. Also, according to Hughes and Howard-Hamilton (2003), “systemic racism is perhaps the most serious obstacle faced by African American women in higher education” (p. 98).

When navigating through an educational institution, race and gender simultaneously also add additional stress for African-American collegiate women. Black women may find themselves experiencing marginalization while their White female peers continue to navigate

their environment with fewer issues. Hughes and Howard-Hamilton (2003) contend that paradigm shifts are needed within higher education in order to adequately understand the oppression that comes from race and gender. An article by Grant and Sage (2015) states, “African American women in the academy must work to deconstruct historical barriers, while also situating a sense of the educated self among an academic community who has not previously known her” (p. 506). This article also discussed how the familial educational experiences of black women helped them navigate throughout predominantly white institutions also known as PWIs and how the “lack of supports in this context can be of detriment to the black woman” (p. 510).

Furthermore, despite the barriers previously referenced, African American women have been resilient in higher education. The 2011 U.S Census Bureau, reports that Black women have a higher percentage of college enrollment than other racial groups, both full and part-time. In addition, African-American women are the most educated group in the United States on the basis of degree completion according to National Center for Education and Statistics. During the academic year of 2013-2014, they earned 66% of associate degrees, 64% of bachelor’s degrees, 70% of master’s degrees and 64% of doctoral degrees (U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, 2017).

The purpose of this study is to examine the role that race and gender play in the lived experiences of African-American women at predominantly white institutions. It also reviews the role that institutional supports, social supports, campus climate and sense of belonging impacts the academic experiences of African-American women in higher education. Despite the successes of women of color—African American women specifically, there are challenges and stresses. The goal of this study is to contextually examine the experiences and thoughts of

African American women in one PWI. The overall examination using qualitative research methods will result in the isolation of themes that characterize the experience of African-American women while navigating institutional space during their collegiate experience. Do existing programs and services supports within the academy impact the experiences of students matriculating through college? Do students perceive there are barriers in place making academic success difficult to achieve? Do students perceive supports in place that can ensure their well-being? Are there barriers that may prevent access to supports for well-being?

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Understanding the plight of African-American women in higher education requires a review of the available literature on the history of higher education in the United States (U.S). The education system in the United States was originally intended to meet the developmental and training needs of white men, White women would next be included in the landscape of those seeking formal educational training. Black men were included in formal educational settings prior to African American women. Prior to 1833, African-American women did not have access to formal education until Oberlin college in Ohio was founded. (The Journal of Blacks in Higher Education, 2018).

Prior to the inclusion of African Americans in institutions of higher education there were opportunities for admission to educational programs that were targeted to African American students—Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs). The Civil Rights Movement would usher in a wave of change in the social environment of many colleges and universities as court challenges and the movement for social justice influenced the policies around admission to colleges and universities throughout the 1960s, 70s, and 80s (U.S. Department of Education, 1999).

During the 1970s, the evolution of Critical Race Theory introduced through the legal justice system by legal advocates would challenge and change the course of history as racism and exclusionary practices directed to people of color were documented and challenged (Hirald, 2010). Simultaneously, radical feminism influenced conversations within the criminal justice system and within educational settings around social dominance, exclusion and role theory. How women were treated and viewed influenced their position in social institutions, to include higher education.

With more women seeking higher education women of color began to find a place for expression and inclusion in these settings. To fully appreciate the achievement of African American women today, it is important to understand the historical path made by and for women of color.

African-Americans were legally barred from receiving an education up until emancipation in 1865. It was illegal to teach reading and writing to African-Americans and there were legal statutes in place to control the behavior of African-Americans. After the Civil War education became accessible and in 1862, Senator Justin Morrill (Vermont, Republican party) spearheaded a movement to improve the state of higher education throughout the U.S. The emphasis was on training Americans in applied sciences, agriculture and engineering. The Morrill Land Grant-Act “gave federal land to the states for the purpose of opening up colleges and universities to educate farmers, scientists and teachers” (College View, 2012, p.1).

Very few institutions established through the Morrill Land Grant Act included African-American students, especially, in the South. Cheyney State University of PA, founded in 1837, is the nation’s first Historically Black University (HBCU). At inception, it started as an elementary school. Several years later, Lincoln University (a private institution) was founded in 1854 in Pennsylvania. In 1865, Shaw University, was the first historically black university founded in the southern portion of the United States (College View, 2012, p.1)

The first wave of Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) included the narratives of African-American men, at the exclusion of African-American women. It was not until 28 years later the integration of black and white students started in higher institutions for learning was observed with some regularity (College View, 2012, p.1). The inclusion of more African-American students receiving public education began when Justin Morrill rectified the

Morrill Land Grant- Act to create Morrill Land Grant- Act of 1890. The revised law specified that “states using federal land grants funds must make their schools open to both blacks and whites or allocate money for segregated black colleges to serve as an alternative to white schools. Sixteen historically black institutions received 1890 land-grant funds” (College View, 2012, p.1). According to Hults (1999) “Black colleges such as Howard, Wilberforce, Morehouse, Lincoln and Shaw educated, retained and graduated most of African-American students until the 1960s” (p.1).

Prior to the creation of Howard and Wilberforce universities, it took the initiative of Black people, the support of American Missionary Association (AMA) and the work of the historic Freedman’s Bureau to set up private colleges and universities for the education of African-Americans (College View, 2012). African-American churches ran elementary schools, vocational schools and became the building block for post-secondary education. Although Cheyney, Wilberforce and Lincoln University were called “universities” or “institutes” from their founding, many of these institutions mission was to provide primary and secondary education to Black people who were unable to receive this education prior to the Civil War. It was not until the “1900s historically black colleges and universities (HBCUs) began to offer programs and courses at the post-secondary level” (U.S. Department of Education, 1992, p.1).

As a result of Civil Rights struggles and an influx of federal programs financially supporting African-American students, the 60s and 70s saw an increase of African-American students at predominantly white institutions. This trend continued until these institutions became the primary educators of these students, “with $\frac{3}{4}$ of Black students now attending predominantly white institutions” (Allen, 1992, p.27). Although, there is a hope for equality in desegregated educational institutions, the promises of opportunity to progress beyond historical barriers

through higher education is questionable due to the decreased enrollment and poor retention rates.

African- American students were “enrolling in colleges at rates below the highs of the late 70s.” (Condition, 1992, p.32). Studies conducted in the 1970s and 80s have identified several factors believe to impact poor retention and graduation rates among African-American students. Identified barriers include financial stress, pre-college academic preparation, the living/learning environment and faculty/student interaction. Another theme that was commonly seen but not often recognized was institutionalized racism. An article by Love (1993) states, “...there has been little institutional recognition of White racism, little discussion of how it is manifested on campus and little attention to how it affects Black students, even in the absence of overt intent to discriminate” (p.29). According to Hults (1999), racism is the common denominator as to why there was a lower educational attainment by black students during certain periods in history.

Many factors played a crucial role in poor retention and graduation rates of African-American students at these predominantly white institutions. Hults (1999) states, that “because Black students, in general, come from families with lower incomes than White students, Black students are more dependent on financial aid to fund their college education” (p.1). There was an influx of federal aid that supported African-American students financially in predominantly white institutions. When there was a decline in federal aid in the 1980s and the major decline in the 1990s, and the abrupt drop in aid in 2008, African American students specifically were negatively impacted (NASPA, 2016). Although, financial support is important for the enrollment of African-Americans and other economically disenfranchised students, student retention is critical and dependent on students’ sense of acceptance, and the perception of the living/learning

environment—factors related to student well-being. Clark and Crawford state (1992), “the greater the compatibility between the student and the institution, the higher the probability that the student will complete all degree requirements” (pg.60) Arguably, if white institutions were created without the needs and interests of students of color in mind, students who are not a part of the ‘majority’ are at risk of not “fitting” in (Hults, 1999, p. 352) An article by Allen (1992) reports, that “students who attended historically Black universities reported better academic performance, greater social environment and higher occupational aspirations than Black students who attended predominantly White institutions” (p. 39).

African-American students’ perception of the living/learning environment at predominantly white institutions is important to their sense of well-being. Other studies have focused on alienation experienced by African-American students. This is usually measured by a tool called University Alienation Scale and other similar instruments. Hults (1999) states, in over 20 years of testing, African-American students consistently scored higher on alienation scales than white students. They even scored higher amongst other minority groups to include Hispanics and Asian- Americans. These results were consistent amongst similar studies done comparing the experiences of students of color to white students when factoring in region of the country (Bennett, 1990; D’Augelli,1993, Fleming, 1984, Hughes,2003, Loo,1986, Nettles, 1986; Oliver, 1985; and Suen,1983).

There is some debate on the role alienation may play on retention and graduation rates of Black students at predominantly white institutions. Suen (1983) identifies a definite correlation between feelings of alienation and retention. Another study by Bennett and Okinaka (1990), found that the longer African-Americans (and Asians) remained on campus, the more alienated they become. However, another interesting perspective, presented in this study was that students

who did not persist to graduation, reported less alienation than those who did. According to Hults (1999), this is open to different interpretation because this could be attributed to those who did not because they could not develop coping mechanisms for the alienation experienced. Thus, the role of alienation is not clear and requires more research.

Racism and discrimination may impact the feelings of alienation on predominantly white campuses. Hults (1999) suggests that African-American students are used to being around predominantly black environments that consist of close friends and family. For many, college is their first major contact with ‘personalized’ white racism. According to the article by D’Augelli and Hersberger (1993), a study including 73 African-American students found, “11% of those African-American students reported never hearing disparaging remarks about Blacks on campus; 89% of those students reported hearing such remarks occasionally, often and frequently; 59% have been verbally insulted and 10% threatened” (p.75). In this same study, 36% reported being verbally harassed in a racial manner by white faculty (D’Augelli and Hersberger, p.76).

Other studies examined the effect of racism on performance and retention. Nettles (1986) found that “feelings of racial discrimination... have a negative effect upon both the progression rates and college grade point average of Black students” (p. 28). Clark and Crawford (1992) also found “a positive racial environment on a campus is associated with good academic performance and persistence” (p.62).

Lastly, faculty play a significant role in the educational life of all students. The education of any student is often determined by the teacher-student relationship inside and outside the classroom (Kobrak, 1992). According to Bennett and Okinaka (1990) “students who feel most positive about their collegiate instructors feel most satisfied with the universities’ social environment, administration and classes” (p.55).

Unfortunately, studies have shown the relationship between black students and white faculty to be problematic. Nettle's study showed that Black students reported less contact with faculty and staff outside of the classroom than white students; Love's study found the faculty "emotionally, socially, and academically unavailable to them (p.31). Allen (1988), showed that Black students felt that the faculty had a difficult time relating to them because of race. Lastly, Feagin (1992) reported that Black students frequently believed that they were treated as 'representatives' of their race and not as individuals.

Although, these studies address some of the issues students face on the basis of race there are also unique experiences among African-American women based on gender. What happens when a student has intersecting identities? What does this mean for African-American women in the academy and how they expected to succeed academically when the combination of race and gender are ignored or overlooked? These and other considerations will be explored in this study through qualitative research methods.

Theoretical and Conceptual Framework

This study is influenced by the phenomenology methodology as understood within the context of qualitative research. Phenomenology describes experiences as they are lived. The uniqueness of one's lived situations are considered in this research approach; the experiences of each research participant is valued and analyzed. Social reality is subjective and therefore understanding the experiences of students is relevant to evaluating their social environment and the effect on educational experiences. Although, all of the women identified as African-American their experiences had similar commonalities but were individually different. Additionally, by examining the lived experiences of each unique participant, the focus of the individual student became the standard that guides and influences this research. This study also

represents the basic tenets of black feminism or ‘womanism’, black feminist thought, intersectionality and John Henryism.

An article by Collins (1996) states, that black feminism “disrupts the racism inherent in presenting feminism as a for-white-only ideology and political movement... Inserting the adjective “black” challenges the assumed whiteness of feminism and disrupts the false universal of this term for both White and Black women.” (p.12) Collins explains how this makes African-American women uncomfortable because it challenges them to confront their own views on sexism and women’s oppression. Collins further explains African-American women “encounter their own experiences repackaged in racist school curricula and media” (Collins, 1996, p.13). In terms of womanism, Collins talks about Alice Walker’s offering of two contradictory meanings of this term. Walker sees womanism as rooted in Black women’s concrete history in racial and gender oppression. The other view is Walker identifying womanism as different and superior to feminism because black and white women cannot operate as equals in identical spaces that have structurally disproportion African-American women (Collins, 1996).

Overall, Black feminist thought is different from feminist theory or feminist thought because it undermines the claim that African-American women and White women have led similar lives. It highlights that African-American women sometimes experience the same issues of discrimination that white women face. That is because they share the experience of being a woman. It also explains how African-American women sometimes experience the same issues of racism that African-American men face and this is because they are a part of the same racial group. However, African-American women are subjective to double discrimination because they experience the combined practices of discrimination on the basis of race (racism) and the basis of gender (sexism) (Collins, 1996). Black feminist thought expands on what intersectionality is and

why it is important to understand the basic fundamentals of what black feminism embodies and its inclusion of the unique experiences that African-American have that historically have not been addressed in the scope of feminism (Cooper, 2018).

Black feminist thought as coined by Patricia Hill Collins is a theoretical approach that embraces the ideas of resistance, voice and activism. She explains that black feminist thought is the emergence of African-American women's power as agents of knowledge. This is done by portraying African-American women as self-defined and self-reliant individuals confronting race, gender and class oppression (Collins, 1986). Intersectionality is a term coined by both Patricia Hill Collins and Kimberlé Crenshaw that compares African-American women's identities to a traffic analogy. This explains how African-American women experience two roads that overlap like sexism and racism because they are both black and female. Crenshaw explains in her TED talk that there needs to be proper resources in place to support African-American women's experiences (The Urgency of Intersectionality, 2016).

Lastly, John Henryism focuses on the experience of marginalized group members. James (1994) developed a theory of active coping specific to the Black community using the American folktale about John Henry. The famous story focused on the attempts of a Black railroad worker to prove his skill against the threat of mechanization. In the end, John Henry wins the race against the machine but at the cost of his life. James saw this story as the creation of a coping strategy, employed by African-Americans in response to racism and structural discrimination. Since, The Ohio State University is a predominantly white institution, students may be experience racism or micro-aggressions at the university. They are also subjective to structural discrimination because the university previously was not created to include the needs of students of color. John Henryism provides an understanding of how African-Americans cope with issues

of discrimination and racism which can be detrimental to a person's overall well-being; especially in the academy. John Henryism eloquently describes why students of color are resilient in the academy but exposes the underlying truth that resiliency on the basis of exclusion due to racism, sexism or any form of discrimination can cost someone's livelihood. With the understanding of these theoretical frameworks, this may lead to the development of new theories regarding the lived experiences that African-American women face in predominantly white spaces in higher education, like The Ohio State University (OSU).

Chapter 3: Methodology

Research Design

A case study approach was used to better understand the lived experiences of African American female students, relative to the role of social & institutional supports, campus climate, and sense of belonging of participants. A group of 9 women made up the case study group. A Qualtrics survey was developed and used to secure responses to twenty-one questions about demographic information. In addition to the demographic information fifteen questions designed for the in-depth, in-person interviews were used to obtain an appreciation for and understanding of how unique personal narratives can reveal content that may improve the social learning environment.

The Qualtrics survey was administered to each participant, in person, before the interviews. There was a total of twenty-one questions on the survey. Eight of the questions contained demographic information to include: name; age (must be at least 18 years old to participate), if they identified as African-American/Black, gender (did participant identify as female); their university identifier for online communication (name/dot number); the declared major, academic status (if they were an undergraduate or graduate); how far they were from home; and if anyone in their family of origin attended college before them. The remaining questions asked about mentors, the presence of African-American professors/instructors in classes since enrollment. There were also scaled questions about sense of support and belonging at OSU, if they worked a full-or part-time job, if they maintained a 2.5 or higher GPA since enrollment, social involvement on campus, and their perception of OSU support programs and services for the African-American community on campus, e.g. extracurricular activities, academic & social supports. The last set of questions were asked to identify the flow of the

interview. If a participant had a low score on their sense of support, then the primary researcher asked more questions to understand why. If a respondent did not have mentors more questions were directed to perceptions about the importance of mentoring and the availability of mentoring for African-American women on campus. The Qualtrics survey gave a deeper insight of how the participants felt anonymously and helped set the tone for the interviews for each participant.

For the in-person interviews, the first question focused on how the campus climate impacted their collegiate experience at The Ohio State University. This included their review of the professors, the classroom & residence hall makeup, dining services, recreational facilities, etc. By asking this question first, the background narrative of the student was developed, which clarified if the students had already identified feelings about the campus climate and its impact on their educational experiences. The second question focused on the mentors that they had at the university. This was asked to see the importance of mentorship in the academy and how faculty and staff may have aided in their academic success.

The third question had three sub-sections on the services they received that supported their social, occupational and academic growth at the university. The social support sub-section focused on their involvement with student organizations on campus; what they do for fun or to relieve from stress; how their family has supported them in their academic experience as well as their friends. The academic support sub-section focused on academic resources like tutoring that helped with subjects like math and English, advisor support, library help and office hours. Lastly, the occupational sub-section focused on jobs that financially supported them during their collegiate career, internships and volunteer opportunities that help enrich their learning experiences.

The fourth question asked about the programs and resources they would like to see at the university for African-American women. The participants expressed a need for more departments on the collegiate level to create programs/resources that focus on professional and personal development, career goals and social involvement for African-American women at the university. The fifth question focused on how their personal life impacted their academic experience in college. This examined how they were able to separate school, work and their social life. This also examined how their collegiate experience could equally impact their social life as well or if these two domains are truly mutually exclusive.

Sample

A total of nine participants/students were recruited for this in-depth, semi-structured and exploratory qualitative study. While, the original goal was to have ten participants (five undergraduates and five graduates) due to the nature of the study, nine was a really good number. This study required open-ended interviews to explore the individual experience of participants navigating spaces that have not previously known them. This sample size was chosen due to the feasibility for the researcher and the research design while keeping the idea of retention in mind. The retention of participants is contingent on creating authentic relationships with each participant and understanding their lived experiences.

Specific inclusion and exclusion criteria were employed to select participants. Potential participants had to be at least 18 years old, identify as female and African-American or Black and must be an undergraduate or graduate at The Ohio State University. Additionally, participants must speak English frequently, but may come from any religious and socioeconomic background.

Measurement and Instrumentation

Data collection for this study happened during Autumn semester, 2018. The Qualtrics survey was administered via my laptop during the actual interviewing time. The in-person interviews were measured by a recorder that was built into the laptop. The results of the surveys and recordings of the interviews were kept in a USB drive and secured by a password. Notes were taken during the in-person interviews to highlight any information or examples that could be beneficial to the construction of this research. The interviews were also later transcribed verbatim without any transcription services so that there was a clear and precise understanding of how the participants felt that could help in the location of themes that could have been missed by a transcribing instrument. A resource guide was constructed as well to help locate programs and resources that help aid women and students of color at OSU.

Study Process

Participants were recruited on the Columbus campus of The Ohio State University. Recruitment was done in-person (word of mouth), via email and on Groupme, a social media platform used to communicate with individuals in larger groups. In order to retain participants a \$15 Target gift card and a free digital copy of a resource guide was given to each individual who agreed to participate in the study.

The interview process happened a month after recruitment in September during the university's fall break in early October and was conducted in-person in The Student Life Multicultural Center's meeting room in the Ohio Union. This was a centralized location for both the undergraduates and graduates and the room was secluded to ensure confidentiality. It was accessible, safe and maintained a low-level of noise interference to facilitate clear interviews.

During the interview, the researcher explained the study process and obtained informed consent from each participant. The Qualtrics survey was administered and the interpersonal interview followed. The recorded interview followed the interview guide of questions. Additional questions were asked for clarification to facilitate open communication from the participant.,

Each interview was transcribed by the primary researcher and themes were identified during the coding process with the co-researcher. Specifically, the information gathered in the interviews were coded for overarching themes that were based on common, reoccurring words and phrases that participants used to describe their feelings and experiences. In order to maintain validity and reliability, the measurement coding process was reviewed by the co-researcher as well. In instances of disagreement, researchers discussed reasoning and edited definitions for congruency to create the final themes.

Chapter 4: Results

This study used a thematic analysis to openly code each of the nine in-depth interviews, following a four-step coding process. That process included the following: pre-coding; coding; categorizing phrases/words into conceptual bins; and the development of themes. Deliberate efforts were made to bracket (remove from influence) personal biases and opinions while transcribing the data. After the data were transcribed into narrative summaries each was read and re read for in depth analysis of words and phrases identified. The next step involved the critical assessment of words, phrases, sentences, and complete sections of the transcribed data for each case entry. Then, after completing the transcripts in depth reviews resulted in highlighted words, phrases, sentences and sections that stood out. Of interest were words that were repeated and described feelings, activities and actions of the participants. Repeatedly and explicitly stated by each participant was a less sense of belonging at the university. However, they did express that they felt a sense of belonging amongst their peers who often shared the same racial identity as them. There were also communicated feelings of being a “token” at the university from the participants. These words and the expressed thoughts behind them are consistent with theories of intersectionality and black feminist thought. Hurtado (1989) article states,

“recently White feminist theorists have begun to recognize the theoretical implications of embracing diversity amongst women; it is moving beyond biological determinism and social categorization of to a conception of gender or race. However, despite these advances, white feminist theory has yet to integrate the experiences of women of color in terms of race, class and gender; subordination is experience simultaneously with the oppression of their own group (African-American men) and their counterparts” (p.839).

After, these words were identified, they were grouped together to create codes and were transferred into a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet. This included details from the interviews that supported the codes. Then, these codes were later sorted into categories and the integration of these codes in logical sense helped in the formulation of themes. Themes that were identified for this study are the following: tokenism, sense of belonging, intersectionality, role-model of resilience and social supports. These themes were determined because of the content mentioned in each transcript. At least three examples were identified that fit the overall themes that were created. For some of these themes, data was synthesized for the development of new theories. This helped in the formulation of new definitions for those common phrases/words. The themes are illustrated in Table 1 below.

Table 1. Identified Themes

Tokenism – Underrepresented populations navigating predominantly white spaces and who feel pressured to speak on the experiences and or represent an entire racial group. ¹		
Intersectionality- n. <i>The interconnected nature of social categorizations such as race and gender as they apply to a given individual or group and create overlap and interdependent systems of discrimination or disadvantage. ²</i>	Sense of Belonging-n. The state in which a person feels comfortable in an environment that supports their physical, emotional, mental and psychological health regardless of race, ethnicity, class, sexual orientation or any other	Social Supports-n. <i>The providing of assistance or comfort to other people to help them cope with a variety of problems. This support comes from interpersonal relationships, family members, support groups and friends.</i>

¹ Definitions that are in manuscript were created by the researcher to fit the scope of this thematic analysis for this particular study.

² Definitions that are italicized were retrieved from secondary sources that already created definitions for these terms and phrases.

(Oxford Dictionary)	intersecting identity they may have.	(Nugent, Pam M.S., “social support,” in <i>PsychologyDictionary.org</i> , 2013)
Role-model of resilience- A person who is resilient in the academy and has impact while serving as an example for future generations (or classes).		

By using tokenism as the primary theme, a strong working definition was created after the interview process by help of the participants and the principal investigator (PI). The working definition of tokenism as stated by the researcher and PI is: underrepresented populations navigating predominantly white spaces and who feel pressured to speak on the experiences and or represent an entire racial group. Though, as the researcher, I created the final definition for this word; it was also used explicitly and implicitly when asked to describe the campus climate. Many, if not all participants, reported that they were the only African-American woman in their classes and sometimes the only African-American person. They often felt pressured to speak on their individual experiences so that their peers can have an “accurate” depiction of the entire African-American narrative. However, there is not an “accurate” depiction that one African-American student can convey because there is diversity between this racial demographic. Examples of tokenism is provided by direct quotes from the data. Each participants identity has been concealed by the creation of pseudo names for confidentiality purposes.

Tokenism in the classroom and on campus:

Samantha (p. 1): ...I haven't had a black professor. I wouldn't say it affects me but it definitely would have been different if I did... However, in the classroom when we talk about certain

things, I'm usually the only Black person.

Aaliyah (p.1): So, I am the only black person in my classes. The teachers know me by name...

Briana (p.1): Candace: How has the campus climate impacted your collegiate experience?

Briana: I don't really feel a sense of belonging and I feel like that has a lot to do with being the only black person in classes or not seeing much black people around campus.

Jasmine (p.3): Yeah, that's another thing. I'm trying my best to not be the only angry black graduate woman in my department. I have a bitter streak and I can get very evil towards people and say really hurtful stuff. I told myself once I'm in grad school, I'm really trying to find words to articulate how I really feel. I can't bring out my "African-American vernacular" because they are going to look at me like I'm ignorant. There is a lot of passive-aggressive/micro-aggression in this school. I've experienced micro-aggressions but not on this level. It's so much!

Danny (p.7): I think just validating Black women experiences is important but at the same time not tokenizing them. I feel sometimes in my classes that I am the "Black woman voice" like the token in the class. Like they expect me to represent and explain the lived experiences of Black people when there is such a spectrum because my experience is not nearly the same as anyone else. Validation and comfortability in a space is important.

From the examples, you can see how the participants mentioned that they were the only African-American person in their classes. Briana described how being the only African-American person in class or on sometimes when she walks on campus impacts her sense of belonging at the university. Danny explicitly stated that "being the only Black person" is

tokenism. She communicated the feelings she was experiencing was solely because of the university “tokenizing” her as an African-American woman. The need to feel comfortable and feel validated played a key role in their review of belonging. The *Qualtrics* survey also provided a numerical lens of how each participant scaled their sense of belonging at the university. This also included a scale of institutional supports as well. Graphs 1 & 2 will illustrate these scales below and will include each participant’s answer of how they felt Ohio State supported the African-American community. Examples of sense of belonging are provided as direct quotes from the data along with the graphs, respectively.

Sense of belonging at the university:

Jasmine (p.8) The [low scale] for sense of belonging comes from my department. It terms of OSU, it’s really big but people I interact with I feel like I belong but talking about my major to other people who may not know much about it is hard because people don’t take my major seriously. Once, I start talking more about it they get to understand my plight. Overall, in the department I don’t feel like I belong. That’s more so academically and racially because I am the only Black graduate student here. Several have applied but have not gotten in.

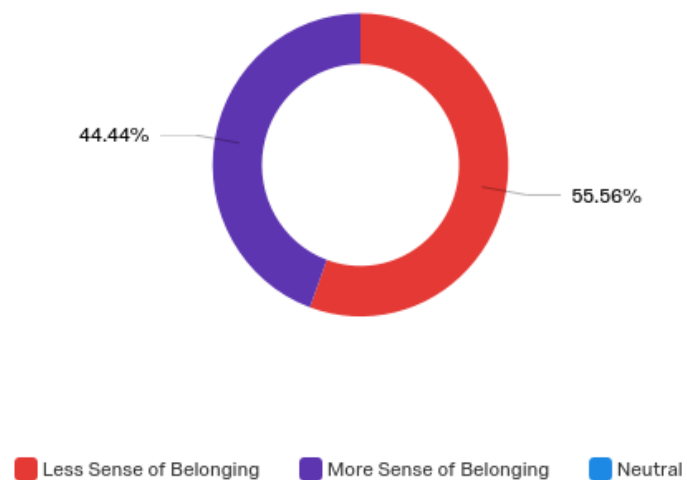
Susie (p.4) First of all, they only have 5.4% of us. The rigor is even harder so it’s like are we really in a position for success? It makes me question everything as an African-American woman. Like, are we really here because they want to see us prosper? Makes me question the whole judgement of campus and why I am here.

Briana (p.6) Like every day I feel like I don’t belong here. I feel like I’m not smart enough. I feel like I have to put on a mask for people to understand me. Sometimes I don’t even talk in

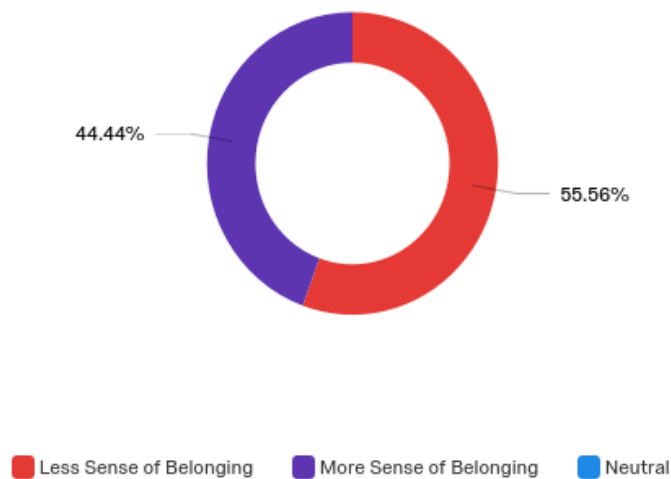
my classes because I feel like I'm not proper enough. When I talk they always question me; I'm just doing it just because I have a scholarship.

Below are the graphs highlighting how each of the nine participants scaled their sense of belonging and support at the university.

Graph 1. Sense of belonging at the university.



Graph 2. Sense of support at the university.

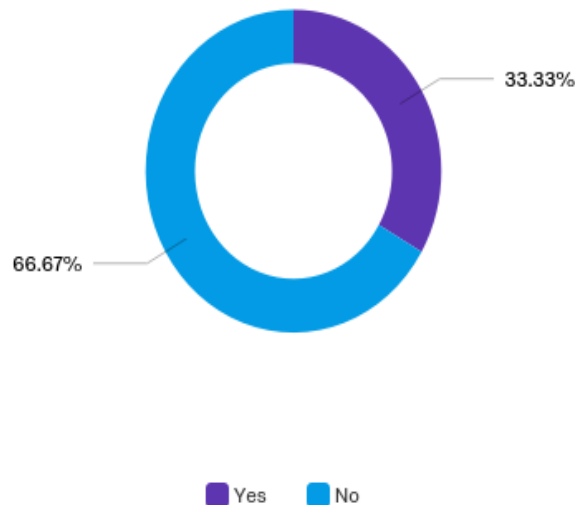


Graph 1 & 2 Analysis.

The scaling questions asked were: “Q- On a scale of 0-10, what is your sense of belonging at OSU?” and “Q- On a scale of 0-10, how supported do you feel at OSU? Answers scaled on the lower end included a scale between 0-4. Answers scaled on the higher end included a scale between 6-10. Neutral scaling was a 5. Thus, there were more participants that felt like they did not belong/ feel supported. This was interesting that no participants scaled in the neutral range. Each of the nine participants who took the *Qualtrics* survey either felt supported and felt a sense of belonging or they did not.

The same nine participants were asked the question: “Q- Do you believe OSU supports the African-American community on campus through extracurricular activities, social supports and academic resources?”. 33.33% (roughly 3) said “yes” and 66.67% (roughly 6) answered “no”. This is illustrated in Graph 3 below.

Graph 3. Perception of university support for African-American students in extra-curricular activities, social supports, and academic resources.



More than half of the participants had a less sense of belonging and also felt that OSU does not support the African-American community. Majority of the participants did not feel as supported on the institutional level, however, they did communicate that they felt supported on the basis of mentorship along with friends and family. Some of the participants mentioned how supportive their family was in their academic success and collegiate experience during their undergraduate or graduate years at this institution. The participants communicated how these social supports played a pivotal role in their matriculation through the academy. Below are the following examples that describe the level of support participants received from mentors, family and friends.

Social Supports:

Briana (p.2) Candace: So, how has your family supported you during your collegiate experience?

Briana: My mom, she's like my rock literally in everything. She graduated from Tiffin University with her Bachelors in Criminal Justice. Even though, Social work and Criminal Justice are two different things they have a lot of similarities. So, she helped me with papers and even social things I deal with.

Lilli (p.3) My personal mentor is Ivory, she works in the office of first-year experience and so she was the person that I asked to be my mentor so that I can have one. Because it is like comfortable having a black mentor like at a predominantly white institution that you can talk to and go through struggles with. I feel like she has really impacted my success because I can compare experiences with her and she understands what I am going through.

Samantha (pg.4) My friends are really supportive and trusting...We've been in our collegiate experience since the 6th grade because of the Young Scholars Program (YSP). We all know the struggles of college and we push each other...Now, my friends who aren't in college they are supportive but I wouldn't say as much only because they don't understand.

Susie (p.2) My parents are VERY supportive! I am fortunate enough to come from two generations of people attending school and graduated college. This is only including my step-mom not my biological mom's side because I don't know them. Since I was a little kid, I've

come from a family of educators. My mom was a teacher; my two grandmothers were teachers; my grandfather was a principal; my dad went to college and graduated. So, I don't have the first-generation college student story.

(p.3) Candace: How do you think your support system has set you up for success in a sense?

Susie: I think my college experiences is different because other people see value in their education because of what they want to do and what they want to get out of. I see value in my education because it's simply an education. It's an opportunity within itself. So, I appreciate learning. If all else fails with my career, I can walk away and say that I've learned something and having that power of education and be willing to give it back in the future is what I see in my family. Other people see it as a path of their success and I see it as a path of growth.

Susie would be considered a negative case scenario as understood within the context of qualitative research. Her idea of social supports mainly come from the support of her family. Especially, her biological father and her step mother. Her unique experience would be considered an outlier but, as the researcher, I find value in her story. Her overall sense of belonging and support in the in-person interviews was considered greater than the rest of the participants. However, she scored low on the *Qualtrics* survey because she understands her experience is different than the majority of her friends that are African-American and she does believe there needs to be a change in the campus climate. This is interesting because Susie knows that her opportunity to embrace learning at the university stems from the familial support, guidance and standard her family has set. She explains how she does not have the typical "first-generation college student" story, which a lot of the participants did have. Many

of them explained how their families were supportive but they still did not fully understand the plight of being a student of color and navigating a predominantly white institution.

Some participants became role-models to their family members because their parents, aunts and/or cousins began pursuing their own post-secondary education. Susie Jones understands the importance of her support system and how their involvement/prior experiences in the academy helps in her matriculation through college. She views college as a way to continue learning when her counterparts (who may classify as first-generation college students) sees education as a way to be successful and to get out of certain circumstances that could present a barrier to their success in the future.

To fully understand the experience of African-American women in predominantly white spaces we have to understand how their identities intersect and how institutions treat these individuals in a peripheral manner because of the lack of understanding about African-American women's lived experiences. Below are examples of intersectionality from the in-person interviews.

Intersectionality:

Jasmine (p.3) Candace: Can you give me an example of when you experienced a micro-aggression on campus?

Jasmine: So, we discussed how much it cost if I leave here with my M.S.A. and how much I'll get paid to work. I basically said, "All of ya'll up in here are going to get paid more than me because I am a Black woman" They were like Jasmine stop being so dramatic. What are you talking about? We are all going to get paid the same coming out of graduate school. I'm like

no we are not. If we look at the statistics you will see that black women in higher academia get paid way less than our counter parts.

Danny (p.2) I became hyper aware of my identity once the election happened. Like, in high school, I was passionate about myself as a woman but I did not really feel affected by the black side. I was involved in a lot of women's organizations but you know being black was just a part of life. I went to high school with majority black people it [race] was not a factor. It was not until the election, when I started to think about what the intersection looks like. What does it mean to be Black but also a woman? They are two different experiences with two different underlying assumptions; which come together to form a different experience than if I was a White woman or if I was a Black man.

Demia (p.8) Well there's a Black Sisters Caucus but maybe like an alumni/current student peer-mentoring program would help with programming for women. To provide that mentoring support because it's a lot to try to battle psychologically. You are black at a white institution and also a woman. There's 60,000 students. You have to try and prove yourself worthy to be here. That is why people do not come back after their first semester. Support is not there. Scholarship programs give money but don't check on the students until you mess up the criteria. I ask myself what can be a realistic to change and I can say a million and one things but until I see someone trying to be proactive then I don't have hope. I just keep doing what I do.

In predominantly white spaces the participants communicated that there is a disconnect from the university and the student. Participants shared that they feel like they have to prove

themselves worthy to be at this institution. Jasmine expressed how her peers do not understand that after she completes the program she will get paid less because of her intersecting identity. Further in her interview, she discussed the structural issues that are in place for African-American women and how historically we have been paid less than our counterparts. Danny mentioned the need to define what it means to be African-American and female. She felt that after the election, she became hyper-aware of her identity. She explained in her interview that she was unsure if this was a good thing since she has excluded herself because of it. She was more hyper-aware of the way her white peers would interact with her and the issues African-American women face in the academy. The graduate students explicitly identified what intersectionality was which helped in the creation of themes. This helped when transcribing the undergraduates' interviews because they described examples of intersectionality but could not give these experiences a "name".

Another theme that was identified from the interviews was role-model of resilience which the researcher and principal investigator defined to be "A person who is resilient in the academy and has impact while serving as an example for future generations (or classes)." This theme was transparent during the discussion of how influential and supportive each participant's family was in their academic success. Examples of role-model of resilience are below.

Role-model of resilience:

Tomara (p.7) Candace: "What is the greatest thing that you have accomplished in your collegiate experience so far?"

Tomara: I do not do great with evaluating the things that I do which I think could be a ‘black women thing’. We are just trying to ‘make it’ but we do not sit back and evaluate how far we have come. I was the first person to have an all-black committee for my Master’s thesis. The school is also still young but that was a great accomplishment because I am like I have been working on this and working so hard to writing it, presenting it and getting looks and side eyes. I think like my greatest accomplishment is working with students and especially black women. Like being able to say something that gives them this epiphany and gives them hope to do something they felt they could not do. I think those are my greatest moments.

Briana (p.2) My little brother, he is my best friend he is always trying to help and just knowing that I have siblings who look up to me helps me through everything because I want to make sure that they have what they need to be successful and I want them to say, “Oh my sister did it, so I can do it too”.

Aaliyah (pg.2) I feel like it motivates me. [death of her mother] I have sisters, too. Like I have four sisters. Two of them are younger than me so I feel like that’s a big motivation. We come from nothing. So, it’s like they need a positive role model. That’s how I keep going.

Being a role-model is not an easy task. However, African-American women have been resilient because they identify the costs and benefits of their education. Briana mentioned that her “making it” shifts generational paradigms for her siblings because if she can attend college and graduate; they will also believe in their intrinsic ability to pursue a post-secondary education. Aaliyah mentioned in her interview how she grew up in poverty and that her younger sisters need

a positive role-model so they can end generational poverty. She believes that her attending OSU is her opportunity to achieve success and to make a better life for herself. Tomara explained how African-American women are “just trying to make it and that we do not evaluate the things that we do” she explains her resilience in the academy and how she enjoys giving back to younger students to help support, inspire and motivate them to see their fullest potential.

These themes provide a glimpse to the reality of what African-American women face in the academy. They highlight the barriers that could be detrimental to their academic success and explore the resources and support that contributed to their individual experiences in the academy.

Chapter 5: Discussion

The results of this study demonstrate the intersectionality of race and gender in higher education and how social supports, sense of belonging and campus climate can impact student success. From the data, it is apparent that each participant identified the duality that the campus climate and social supports have on student's sense of belonging. Each participant mentioned how they have been the only African-American student in their classes. Some explained how the lack of representation with professors and students impact their ability to succeed at The Ohio State University. This included communicated feelings of worthiness which negatively impacts the psyche because students will begin to believe they are unworthy to be in the academy. This may also impact the desire and work ethic they put forth to get involved, to attend and participate in class and to stay optimistic and positive about their experiences. That is why a support system is important to allow reframing to happen so that students understand their ability to succeed in predominantly white spaces. Additionally, the data highlighted the importance of social supports and how having relatable mentors that can attest to student's lived experiences, allows them to feel like they belong at the university. It also helps address the barriers that are in place that may limit student achievement for African-American women.

These findings strongly correlate with the research, as it explains how retention of African-American students is dependent on students' perception of the living/learning environment and sense of acceptance; which impact student well-being (Clark & Crawford, 1992). In the literature, sense of belonging impacts the probability of a student successfully completing degree requirements which not only impacts the student but the institution as well (Clark & Crawford, 1992). According to Enrollment Services Analysis and Reporting, The Ohio State University had an overall 94.2% retention rate for first-year students in 2016 (Enrollment

Services, 2017). However, for African-American students the retention rate was 90.6%, which is 3.6% less than their white counterparts. In prior years, the retention rate continued to decrease for second, third and fourth year African-American students. Thus, meaning after their first-year, there were barriers in place that prevented them to sustain at the university. In 2015, the retention rate for second-year, African-American students was 85.9%; for African-American women it was 87.8%. (Enrollment Services, 2017). What does this mean? While, it is important to recruit students of color to be a part of these spaces; there is also a need to retain and graduate these students. There is an immense amount of support for freshman students when they enter Ohio State. However, these same efforts must continue, to keep those diverse students in their respective majors across undergraduate and graduate programs.

Demia (graduate participant of the study who majored in Social Work) eloquently stated the why students do not want to come back to the university after their first year. She explained that scholarship programs give money to students but after their first-year they do not check on them and that lack of support plays a major role. How can students, especially African-American women, be expected to navigate a system like higher education, excel academically but not receive the proper institutional supports to aid in their sense of belonging and academic success? There are many resources available at the university, the issue is the accessibility of these resources. During formulation of these resources, African-American students needs should be in mind. However, African-American women are the most educated group in the United States on the basis of degree completion according to National Center for Education and Statistics. During the academic year of 2013-2014, they earned 66% of associate degrees, 64% of bachelor's degrees, 70% of master's degrees and 64% of doctoral degrees (U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, 2017).

African-American women have continued to succeed, despite the negative experiences they may have in the academy. How is this possible?

I had the opportunity to attend a program hosted by Dr. Gisell Jeter-Bennett (intercultural specialist of Women Student Initiatives within The Student Life Multicultural Center) during Women's History Month. The program was titled, *Eloquent Rage: A Black Feminist Discovers Her Superpower*, which is a book authored by Dr. Brittney Cooper. At this program, Dr. Cooper, discussed what it meant to be a Black feminist and what Black feminism looks like. She described that black feminism explains how African-American women are humans first and not a brand. She even delves into the depths of being an African-American scholar in the academy and how it is killing because of the pressure to excel academically while still trying to focus on individual issues. These issues are often detrimental to the academic success and well-being of African-American women. Her rhetoric resonated with a lot of African-American students in attendance as evidenced by so many students being eager to ask her questions. She explained that 'being heard' is far more important than 'being right' and it's not 'what you say' but 'how you say it'.

At the end of her enlightening discussion, she opened the floor for questions or comments. As a researcher, I asked "How do you think African-American women are continuing to succeed academically in spaces that disportion them because of their intersecting identities?". This is the question that came about after review of the data set. From this research, each participant embodied resilience and it was unclear as to how they were able to still succeed in an institution that does not fully understand their intersecting identities. Although, there were social supports in place it still did not answer how they are able to be optimistic, resilient and motivated to pursue their education. Dr. Cooper answered, "As African-American women, we

find importance in community. We have a clear sense that there is a lot to lose if we do not succeed. Our ‘making it’ shifts generational possibilities and teaches them that they can succeed, too. We are role-models and we understand that if we do not make it someone else coming after us will not either. There is a black feminist view called “visionary pragmatism” which means that African-American women look at the future and identify what it will take to get us there”.

According to Dr. Cooper, African-American women are able to succeed because of the very themes identified in this research. African-American women find the importance in community and value their social capital at the university who are mostly made up of African-American mentors, family and friends. Role-model of resilience is another theme that this research identified. Dr. Cooper explained how this impacts the academic success, retention, graduation and resilience in African-American women. African-American women are able to persevere at The Ohio State University because they have younger siblings or students that they are role-models to. They understand the importance of collectivism because the degree they will obtain is an accomplishment for the entire familial unit. Despite the obstacles that African-American women have faced in the academy from the historical context and into the present day- they have proven to not let the circumstances of their environment negatively impact their academic achievement. This in itself, is heroic and embodies the selflessness that African-American women have when navigating spaces that have not formerly known them. It further highlights their strength and tenacity to stay hopeful and optimistic throughout their collegiate career.

Implications

Further research is needed to understand the lived experience of African-American women at predominantly white institutions. This research provides a foundational lens as to why

diversity is important in higher institutions of learning. To fully understand the needs of students of color there should be platforms in place to allow students to share their lived experiences. Change cannot happen without institutions understanding the populations they serve, their needs and what they would like to see changed at the university level. Being an African-American woman is only one example of intersectionality. There are other students at the university who may also have intersecting identities based on socioeconomic status (SES), disability, sexual orientation, religion and much more. This research may influence other scholars to look at the lived experience of diverse individuals to further improve the social learning environment in higher institutions of learning.

In addition, the formulation of a resource guide was created to address the disconnect that limited access to resources may play in students' achievement and sense of belonging. There have been efforts in place to centralize and consolidate resources available on the Columbus campus of The Ohio State University and this guide may also serve as a resource to students in the near future.

Two findings from this research may contribute to the formulation of new theories. The first finding is that 'diversity is contextual'. Statistics can show the number of diverse students enrolled at the university but this is not an accurate depiction of what these numbers look like across different programs and colleges. An African-American student can feel a sense of belonging and representation in the African-American and African studies department but that may not be the case for the Engineering department. According to the Ohio State Statistical Summary, Ohio State is not as diverse in terms of racial identity. Total enrollment of students in August 2017 at the Columbus campus was 59,837. There are only 11,821 minorities apart of that total. African-American students only make up 5.68%, or roughly 3,401 students (OSU

Statistical Summary, 2017). Participants in the study explained that coming to Ohio State was a ‘culture shock’ for them because they were under the impression that this institution was very diverse. Although, over the years the number of minority students is increasing at the university gradually there is still a need to enroll, retain and graduate more students of color, especially African-American students.

Lastly, the other finding is related to ‘tokenism’. Professors and students should not ‘tokenize’ students of color, meaning they should not expect students to represent a racial group. That is a form of a micro-aggression that many students of underrepresented populations face at this predominantly white institution. Many participants communicated that they felt like “tokens” in the classroom because they were usually the only African-American student or the only African-American woman and felt that their peers expected them to speak on the Black experience on behalf of the race.

Overall, there needs to be a push for more resources to support students of color, especially African-American women. Participants mentioned the need for programs that cater to the needs of African-American women because they feel their narratives are often grouped with other ‘women of color’. In order to increase diversity on predominantly white institutions there must be spaces where diverse students can feel supported, have mentors and find resources available for their unique needs. The Ohio State University is filled with many possibilities to grow personally and professionally. However, in order to have students invest back into the university after graduation the institution must first invest in the overall emotional, physical, mental and social well-being of all students.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Table 1. Identified Themes

Tokenism – Underrepresented populations navigating predominantly white spaces and who feel pressured to speak on the experiences and or represent an entire racial group. ¹		
<p>Intersectionality- n. <i>The interconnected nature of social categorizations such as race and gender as they apply to a given individual or group and create overlap and interdependent systems of discrimination or disadvantage.</i>² (Oxford Dictionary)</p>	<p>Sense of Belonging-n. The state in which a person feels comfortable in an environment that supports their physical, emotional, mental and psychological health regardless of race, ethnicity, class, sexual orientation or any other intersecting identity they may have.</p>	<p>Social Supports-n. <i>The providing of assistance or comfort to other people to help them cope with a variety of problems. This support comes from interpersonal relationships, family members, support groups and friends.</i> (Nugent, Pam M.S., “social support,” in <i>PsychologyDictionary.org</i>, 2013)</p>
<p>Role-model of resilience- A person who is resilient in the academy and has impact while serving as an example for future generations (or classes).</p>		

¹ Definitions that are in manuscript were created by the researcher to fit the scope of this thematic analysis for this particular study.

² Definitions that are italicized were retrieved from secondary sources that already created definitions for these terms and phrases.

Appendix B

Interview Guide

1. How has the campus climate impacted your collegiate experience at OSU? (Professors, programs, classroom set up, residence halls, food services etc.)
2. How would you describe your academic success at OSU? (Has it been stressful, does it fluctuate, are you holding on strong, etc.)
3. Do you have mentors that has helped your personal growth?
4. What services have you received that has supported your occupational and academic success? (internship, tutoring, etc).
5. How has your family supported you during your collegiate experience? Explain the role your family plays or the lack-there-of.
6. How have your friends impacted your collegiate experience at OSU? Are they supportive and trusting? Do you have people you can trust and confide in?
7. Has anyone in your family of origin completed college (mother/step-mother, father/step-father and siblings)? If not, how has having family that have attended college impact your college career?
8. Are you involved on campus? If so, what organizations?
9. What is your outlet when you feel stressed from school?
10. Do you know where to go on campus when you are experiencing issues revolving academics or personal issues?
11. What resources or programs would you like to see on campus for women and women of color?
12. How did you go about choosing OSU?
13. How did you go about choosing your major?
14. What was the greatest thing you've accomplished during your collegiate experience?
15. How has your personal life impacted your academic experience at OSU?

Appendix C

Qualtrics Survey Questions

Qualtrics survey questions: link:

https://osu.az1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_41MfVzp1ABTMvGt

1. Name
2. Are you 18 years or older?
3. Do you identify as African-American or Black?
4. Do you identify as female?
5. Dot #?
6. What is your major?
7. Are you an undergraduate?
8. If you answered yes to the previous question, what year are you?
9. Are you a graduate student?
10. If you answered yes to previous question, have you attended an HBCU?
11. Has anyone in your family of origin completed college (mother/step-mother, father/step-father and siblings)?
12. How far away from home are you (time to travel)?
13. On a scale of 1-10, how supported do you feel at OSU?
14. Have you maintained a 2.5 or higher GPA since your enrollment at OSU?
15. Have you experienced obstacles during your collegiate career as an undergraduate, graduate, non-traditional student or transfer student?
16. Have you had a black instructor since your enrollment at OSU?
17. On a scale of 1-10, what is your sense of belonging at OSU?
18. Do you have mentors at OSU?
19. Do you work a full-time or part-time job?
20. Are you involved in any student organizations at OSU?
21. Do you believe OSU supports the African-American community on campus through extracurricular activities, social supports and academic resources?

Thank you for your participation!

Appendix D: Participant Contact Email & Groupme message

</Subject Line/> Research Participants Needed for a Study on African-American Women about their collegiate experience at OSU” </Subject Line/>

Hello,

My name is Candace L. Cooper and I am a fourth-year majoring in Social Work. I am contacting you because I will be conducting a study on African-American women at The Ohio State University for my Honors Thesis. I am looking for 10 participants for this study. This study will focus on the lived experiences of undergraduate and graduate African-American women at the collegiate level who attend a PWI. This will include black women’s perspective on campus climate, resources available (examination of informal supports), social supports (family, friends and peers) and how all of this may have/had an impact on their academic success.

The study will have two phases. Phase 1 will consist of you taking a short survey. It should last no longer than 5-10 minutes of your time. Phase 2 will consist of one 90-minute interview. The entire study will be over a course of 3-4 weeks and a total of 2 hours.

Upon completion of this study and your willingness to participate there will be an incentive given to you. You will receive a \$15 gift card ranging from fast-food restaurants-department stores. Gift cards will be given at random. Resource guide will also be given to participants.

If you are interested in being a part of this study you will contact Candace L. Cooper at cooper.2306@osu.edu.

Warm regards,
Candace L. Cooper



Appendix E: Consent Form

The Ohio State University Consent to Participate in Research

Study Title: Intersectionality of Race and Gender in Higher Education: The Plight of the African-American at a Predominantly White Institution (PWI).

Researcher: Candace L. Cooper

Sponsor: n/a

This is a consent form for research participation. It contains important information about this study and what to expect if you decide to participate.

Your participation is voluntary.

Please consider the information carefully. Feel free to ask questions before making your decision whether or not to participate. If you decide to participate you will be asked to sign this form and will receive a copy of the form.

Purpose: The purpose of this study is to examine the lived experiences of African-American women in higher education. The focus population are African-American women at predominantly white institutions. The focus is to see how race and gender intersect in higher education through examination of informal supports, social supports, campus climate and how all of this might impact their experiences and academic success.

Procedures/ Tasks: The study will have two phases. Phase 1 will consist of you taking a short survey. It should last no longer than 5-10 minutes of your time. Phase 2 will consist of the interview. The interview will last no longer than 90 minutes.

Duration: The entire study will be over a course of 3-4 weeks and a total of 2 hours. You may leave the study at any time. If you decide to stop participating in the study, there will be no penalty to you, and you will not lose any benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. Your decision will not affect your future relationship with The Ohio State University.

Risks and Benefits: There are minimal risks by taking this study. All information will be confidential and no identifiable information (i.e. first and last name) will be presented in the final study, only the lived experiences of the participant. The benefit of this study is that the information gathered could potentially educate the OSU community and college campuses abroad about the lived experiences that African-American have in higher education. The goal for this study is inform practice, increase research and implement change and resources for African-American women at the collegiate level.

Confidentiality:

Efforts will be made to keep your study-related information confidential. However, there may be circumstances where this information must be released. For example, personal information regarding your participation in this study may be disclosed if required by state law. Also, your records may be reviewed by the following groups:

- Office for Human Research Protections or other federal, state, or international regulatory agencies;
- The Ohio State University Institutional Review Board or Office of Responsible Research Practices

We will work to make sure no one sees your survey responses without approval. But, because we are using the internet, there is a chance that someone could access your online responses without permission. In some cases, this information could be used to identify you.

Incentives: Upon completion of this study and your willingness to participate there will be an incentive given to you. You will receive a \$15 gift card ranging from fast-food restaurants-department stores. Gift cards will be given at random. Resource guides will also be given to participants after the completion of the study. If participants choose to no longer participate they will still be able to receive \$15 gift card.

Participant Rights:

You may refuse to participate in this study without penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. If you are a student or employee at Ohio State, your decision will not affect your grades or employment status.

If you choose to participate in the study, you may discontinue participation at any time without penalty or loss of benefits. By signing this form, you do not give up any personal legal rights you may have as a participant in this study.

An Institutional Review Board responsible for human subjects research at The Ohio State University reviewed this research project and found it to be acceptable, according to applicable state and federal regulations and University policies designed to protect the rights and welfare of participants in research.

Contacts and Questions:

For questions, concerns, or complaints about the study, or you feel you have been harmed as a result of study participation, you may contact Carla Curtis at Curtis.60@osu.edu

For questions about your rights as a participant in this study or to discuss other study-related concerns or complaints with someone who is not part of the research team, you may contact Ms. Sandra Meadows in the Office of Responsible Research Practices at 1-800-678-6251.

Signing the consent form

I have read (or someone has read to me) this form and I am aware that I am being asked to participate in a research study. I have had the opportunity to ask questions and have had them answered to my satisfaction. I voluntarily agree to participate in this study.

I am not giving up any legal rights by signing this form. I will be given a copy of this form.

Printed name of subject

Signature of subject

AM/PM

Date and time

**Printed name of person authorized to
consent for subject (when applicable)**

**Signature of person authorized to consent
for subject
(when applicable)**

AM/PM

Relationship to the subject

Date and time

Investigator/Research Staff

I have explained the research to the participant or his/her representative before requesting the signature(s) above. There are no blanks in this document. A copy of this form has been given to the participant or his/her representative.

**Printed name of person obtaining
consent**

Signature of person obtaining consent

AM/PM

Date and time